

DAILY BULLETIN

JULY 24, 2006

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BUSH RENEWS U.S. COMMITMENT TO PEACE IN MIDDLE EAST

United States will work to resolve current crisis between Israel, Lebanon

President George W. Bush pledged to continue working toward resolution of the crisis between Israel and Lebanon, saying the United States will also "continue to seek a return to the road map for peace in the Middle East" that includes "establishing a viable democratic Palestinian state."

"I believe sovereign nations have the right to defend their people from terrorist attack," President Bush said in his weekly radio address July 22. "We have also called on Israel to continue to exercise the greatest possible care to protect innocent lives."

He cited Hizballah militants as the cause of the current crisis in the Middle East, but he had words for Syria and Iran: "Syria has been a primary sponsor of Hizballah and it has helped provide Hizballah with shipments of Iranian-made weapons." He said their actions "threaten the entire Middle East and stand in the way of resolving the current crisis and bringing lasting peace" to the region. He deplored "Hizballah's practice of hiding rockets in civilian neighborhoods, and its efforts to undermine the democratically elected government" of Lebanon.

"Our efforts to resolve this dangerous situation are guided by an international framework that is already in place," Bush said, referring to U.N. Security Council Resolution 1559, which recognizes the sovereignty of Lebanon, calls for the withdrawal of all foreign troops,

and the disbanding and disarming of militias. He said Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will travel to the Middle East to discuss ways to resolve the crisis.

Bush noted that the United States will contribute humanitarian aid to Lebanon, joining Arab nations who already have offered assistance. He also said American embassy officials and military will continue to assist in the evacuation of American citizens from Lebanon.

The United States supports moderate leaders, "like Palestinian Authority President Abbas," and will "continue to call on Hamas to end its acts of terror." He said, "America remains committed to lasting peace in the Middle East," adding, "The world's best hope for lasting security and stability across the Middle East is the establishment of free and just societies."

An audio file of the president's address is available on the White House Web site.

RICE TO VISIT ISRAEL, ROME FOR TALKS ON MIDEAST CRISIS

Secretary of state calls for plan to ensure stable, enduring peace in region

By Lea Terhune
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced plans to travel to Rome the week of July 23, where she will meet with members of the "Lebanon Core Group" to discuss the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hizballah. She also will stop in Israel and the Palestinian Territories to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. She plans to depart July 23.

In Rome, representatives of the Core Group, which includes Lebanon, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, the European Union, Russia, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Nations and the World Bank, will work to develop a plan for a sustainable resolution to the violence between Israel and Hizballah. Discussions will focus on political issues, security concerns, humanitarian

needs, and support for the economic reconstruction of Lebanon, according to a State Department official.

"We do seek an end to the current violence, and we seek it urgently. More than that, we also seek to address the root causes of that violence so that a real and enduring peace can be established," Rice said at a State Department press conference July 21.

In a separate briefing, Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs David Welch told reporters, "We are not delaying here. If we can put in place the conditions tomorrow for a cease-fire, obviously we would do so. But we believe that it's going to take some time -- it doesn't necessarily have to take a lot of time, and the less time it takes the better -- we can put together elements for a more stable situation than we see right now."

While reiterating Israel's right to defend itself "in response to Hizballah's outrageous provocation in an already tense region," Rice said, "We urge Israel's leaders to do so with the greatest possible care to avoid harming innocent civilians, and with care to protect civilian infrastructure." She blamed Hizballah for initiating the violence and called for the release of the kidnapped Israeli soldiers.

Rice said Israel has responded positively to proposals "to open up a humanitarian corridor" so that international assistance can flow to the victims of the hostilities. She added that the United States intends to give Lebanon "direct humanitarian assistance."

Creating a framework for lasting peace is the goal of the discussions in Rome, rather than a temporary cease-fire, which would be "a guarantee of future violence," she said.

"You can't have a situation in which the south of Lebanon is a haven for unauthorized, armed groups that sit and fire rockets into Israel, plunging the entire country into chaos, when the Lebanese government did not even know that this was going to be done," the secretary said. Welch called Hizballah's actions an assault on Lebanese democracy and said the United States would respond vigorously as a reflection of its commitment to the spread of democracy in the Middle East.

"There is nothing more anti-democratic than usurping the authority of the state to launch an act of warfare against a neighbor without the consent of the people or the state," he said.

Rice advocated a framework of conflict resolution “along three tracks: political, economic and security.” In her view, the crisis likely will require a “robust” stabilization force to support the Lebanese government in deployment of its military forces throughout its territory. She said the composition of an international force is being considered, but that she does not expect U.S. ground forces to take part in the mission.

After a series of discussions with leaders from the Group of Eight (G8), several Arab countries and the United Nations team that just returned from the Middle East, Rice said, “I think we are beginning to see the outlines of a political framework that might allow the cessation of violence in a more sustainable way.”

She spoke of Lebanon as a “young government” that requires international assistance to regain and maintain stability. She said the United States remains committed to supporting the Lebanese government.

Welch said the Rome meeting also would serve to rally the international assistance Lebanon needs. “I think Lebanon will enjoy a great deal of international support. I think we will be able to muster a strong consensus to assist that country,” he said.

U.S. CALLS FOR “SUSTAINED SOLUTION” TO ISRAELI-HIZBALLAH CONFLICT

Bolton says permanent solution will require implementation of Resolution 1559

By Peggy B. Hu
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- A “sustained solution” to the conflict between Israel and Hizballah will require full implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1559, which recognizes the sovereignty of Lebanon and calls for the withdrawal of all foreign troops and the disbanding and disarming of militias, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations John Bolton says.

In remarks on Fox News Sunday July 23, Bolton said Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice’s trip to Israel and

Rome will enable her to speak to members of the “Lebanon Core Group” -- Lebanon, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, the European Union, Russia, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Nations and the World Bank -- and other “important leaders on the ground.”

“What we’re trying to do here is to put together the elements for a sustained solution to the problem, at least between Lebanon and Israel,” he said. Such a solution will need to strengthen the government of Lebanon and eliminate “the Hizballah terrorist threat, which threatens both the innocent civilians of Lebanon as well as Israel.”

“The worst result here would be a partial solution that returns us to this kind of problem again in a matter of weeks or months. We’ve got to think of the longer term here. There may be an opportunity. We need to go about it in a sustained fashion,” he said.

PROPOSALS FOR AN INTERNATIONAL FORCE IN LEBANON

In remarks on CNN’s Late Edition the same day, Bolton said the United States has been looking at the possibility of a multinational force in Lebanon, “perhaps authorized by the Security Council, but not a U.N.-helmeted force,” analogous to the multinational force and observers in the Sinai between Egypt and Israel.

Bolton did not express an opinion on whether U.S. or NATO forces should be involved in such a multinational force, but he stressed that “the fundamental principle we have to look at is strengthening Lebanese armed forces and the democratic government of Lebanon generally.”

Bolton warned such a multinational force must avoid taking over responsibilities that rightfully belong to the Lebanese government.

“What we really want to do is further carry out resolution 1559 to strengthen the institutions of the government of Lebanon, to assist in this case the Lebanese armed forces to be able to assert their authority over all the Lebanese territory,” he said on Fox News Sunday. “[Y]ou don’t want a multilateral force that usurps that role. You want a multilateral presence, an international presence that strengthens the Lebanese government’s ability to control all of its territory.”

Bolton noted that the current U.N. force in Lebanon, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL),

does not have the mandate to enforce U.N. Security Council Resolution 1559.

According to the United Nations Web site, UNIFIL was created in 1978 “to confirm Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, restore the international peace and security, and help the Lebanese Government restore its effective authority in the area.”

ISRAEL’S RIGHT TO DEFEND ITSELF

Speaking on CNN’s Late Edition, the U.S. ambassador warned against falling into “the trap of moral equivalency” in deciding whether or not Israel’s recent actions have been appropriate.

“What Hizballah has done is kidnap Israeli soldiers and rain rockets and mortar shells on innocent Israeli civilians. What Israel has done in response is act in self-defense,” he said.

Bolton said the United States has urged Israel to exercise “the utmost care in the conduct of its military operations, to avoid innocent Lebanese civilians and to avoid damage to the democratic government of Lebanon,” and he added he believes Israel “is trying to carry that out.”

Bolton noted Israel also has decided to allow the establishment of corridors into Lebanon to allow the distribution of humanitarian supplies to civilians.

“I think that’s a very important development, to make sure that, even as hostilities continue, that the innocent civilians in Lebanon are provided for,” he said.

CRITICISM OF SYRIA AND IRAN

Bolton sharply criticized Syria and Iran for their support of terrorist organizations.

“[W]hat we need Syria and Iran to do is stop supporting and financing terrorist groups like Hizballah and Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad,” he said on CNN’s Late Edition. “[G]ood estimates say that Iran supplies Hizballah roughly \$100 million a year, and it was either Iran or Syria that supplied Hizballah with the Chinese-built C-802 anti-ship cruise missile that hit that Israeli ship a few days ago.”

“Iran and Syria could contribute a lot if they’d stay out of the internal affairs in Lebanon and let that new democracy flourish,” he said.

IRAN’S URANIUM ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

Bolton said the current crisis in Lebanon has not distracted the United Nations Security Council from its efforts to halt Iran’s nuclear enrichment activities.

“Right now, in the Security Council we’re trying to carry out the decision of the foreign ministers of the five permanent members of the council to impose on Iran a mandatory requirement that they suspend their uranium enrichment activities,” he said. “And if they fail to do that, then the council, pursuant to the agreement that the foreign ministers have already reached, will begin to impose sanctions on Iran and further isolate internationally.”

Bolton said the United Nations is looking at “targeted sanctions” that would focus on financial transactions. He added, however, that there are also other types of financial measures “we can and have been applying robustly to pressure the Iranian government to give up this nuclear weapons program.”

HEALTH OFFICIALS FOCUS ON HOW TO RESPOND TO DISEASE OUTBREAK

United States backs training in Thailand; Indonesia reports more human bird flu

By Charlene Porter
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – Concern about a pandemic of avian influenza triggered a meeting of more than 100 experts in human and animal health from 14 countries in Thailand July 17-21, just as further reason for their concern was confirmed with Indonesia’s report of its 42nd death from the H5N1 avian influenza virus.

The Ministry of Health reported July 20 a human case of H5N1 involving a 44-year-old man from Jakarta province, who took ill on June 24 and died on July 12.

Confirming the case, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that the man had contact with poultry around his home and place of employment at a market where birds are slaughtered. Tests of birds in the areas he frequented are being conducted in search of the H5N1 virus. The highly pathogenic avian influenza virus has killed hundreds of millions of animals over the last two and a half years.

With this confirmed death, Indonesia has detected human H5N1 fatalities in numbers equal to those found in Vietnam, heretofore the nation most severely affected with human cases. Vietnam has not detected a single human case since 2005. Indonesia has detected 37 cases in 2006 alone, more than any other of the nations from Southeast Asia to the Horn of Africa that have reported cases this year.

DISEASE SURVEILLANCE TRAINING IN BANGKOK

The mounting toll of H5N1 since it began appearing widely in Southeast Asia in late 2003 has led international health officials to urge greater awareness and preparedness for the possibility of pandemic disease and widespread public health emergencies. That is why 100 experts convened in Bangkok, Thailand, to learn how to mount a rapid response to outbreaks of infectious disease. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Thai Ministry of Health (MOPH) and the WHO are collaborating in the training in Bangkok, which provides guidance on how public health workers need to respond within the first 72 hours of the outbreak of a respiratory disease to recognize disease, identify and contain it, and begin treatment, vaccination and public information activities.

“They are epidemiologists, influenza experts or training specialists,” said Sonja J. Olsen, the acting chief of the International Emerging Infections Program, a collaborative program based in Bangkok, sponsored by CDC and Thai MOPH. “Each of these participants is charged with returning to their country, translating and adapting the material as needed, and then putting on more training courses,” said Olsen in an e-mail interview with the Washington File.

Specialists participating in the training come from Bangladesh, Burma, Cambodia, China, Egypt, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Laos, South Africa, Thailand, the United States and Vietnam. Thailand was among the first countries to be stricken in the avian influenza pan-

demic that now has affected domestic or wild birds in more than 50 countries.

Since the first appearance of the highly pathogenic avian influenza strain H5N1 in Southeast Asia in late 2003, the virus also has infected 231 humans, causing 133 deaths worldwide.

Thailand has discovered 22 of the human cases of disease resulting in 14 deaths.

In tracking the appearance of the disease in animals, Thai authorities submitted more than 80 reports to the World Organisation for Animal Health, some reporting dozens of outbreaks at either small backyard farms, or large poultry operations, requiring the destruction of tens of thousands of birds. When disease becomes that pervasive in an environment, providing so many opportunities for the transmission of the dangerous virus between animals and humans, the chance for a serious outbreak of human disease increases.

Thai MOPH is sharing its experience in working in that environment with others at the July training session. “Our goal is to take what we’ve learned from our responses to avian influenza and assist senior epidemiologist in building teams that can recognize and respond to outbreaks that have the potential to become pandemics,” said Dr. Tawat Suntharaja, director-general of the Department of Disease Control at Thai MOPH. “When these trainees return to their countries, they’ll be better equipped to train their colleagues in effective rapid response to any outbreak.”

Regarding the Thai experience with human and animal disease since 2003, Olsen said, “These experiences have taught us all about the importance of preparedness for new disease threats, the importance of good communication between animal and health agencies and the importance of transparency and openness so that the international health community can work together to prevent additional illness and death.”

Thailand appears to have contained effectively and controlled H5N1, having detected no further appearance of the virus since November 2005. Though no further training sessions are scheduled in the immediate future, Olsen expects more will be organized in the months ahead. This latest round of training is part of a wide-ranging U.S. and international strategy to support vulnerable countries in strengthening their capabilities to detect, contain and control disease as a strategy to prevent pandemic.

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